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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the organized feminist resistance, during the 1970s, to the availability of both soft and hard-core pornography in mainstream films, magazines, and advertisements. A research review supports the contention that the power struggle between men and women as defined by the pornography issue merely reflects a deeper, generally-accepted gender inequality which tends to leave women out of the shaping of corporate and legal policies. The use of consumer boycott by a group of feminists in the late 1970s is discussed in depth in order to provide support for the conclusion that feminists can define a more active role for themselves in determining corporate media policy regarding the portrayal of women. Forty-three references and 12 figures (illustrations) are attached. (NH)

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RESISTANCE TO VIOLENT PORNOGRAPHY: THE QUESTION OF FEMINIST PRAXIS*

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ABSTRACT

RESISTANCE TO VIOLENT PORNOGRAPHY:
THE QUESTION OF FEMINIST PRAXIS

The paper examines the ways in which feminists have resisted the presence of violent pornography since it first began to appear in the mainstream media in the mid 1970s. The discussion uses a feminist-Marxian-Foucauldian framework of analysis to compare both statutory and non-statutory forms of feminist resistance to violent pornography. Central to the analysis is women's relationship to the media industries that produce images of women being physically and sexually abused and the ways in which this relationship really reflects a broader context of the relations of power between men and women in our society.

RESISTANCE TO VIOLENT PORNOGRAPHY: THE QUESTION OF FEMINIST PRAXIS

A thing can be a use-value without being a value.

Karl Marx, Capital

Women are portrayed, seen, and treated as "little treats." I was taught that I was a "sweet thing" and when I grew up, I found that I was a marketable commodity. One of the porn series I was in used food names for the women, like Taffy, Candy, Cookie.

"Jane Jones," former pornography model, in Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography

Relations of power are not in superstructural positions . . they have a directly productive role, wherever they come into play.

Michel Foucault History of Sexuality, Vol. 1

Purpose and Direction of Essay

This essay examines the relations of power between American feminists and the media industries which produce physically and sexually violent images of women. My focus is particularly on organized feminist resistance during the 1970s to the availability of mainstream films, magazines, and advertisements which featured women and female youth in bondage and/or being physically or

sexually violated in some way. I will refer to these depictions and the media which contain them as pornography.

My purpose is to situate the concerns and actions of feminists working to control the availability of pornography in the mainstream mass media within the larger discourse on relations between the sexes in U. S. society. This calls into question the economic, political, and social forces which determine the degree of control that one sex has over the other (namely men over women) through the various social institutions. The pornography industries together represent a powerful economic entity which some feminists have deemed one of the most severe forms of the technologies of sex that have been used by men to maintain their position of superiority (Diamond and Quinby, 1988, p. 197). Essentially, this raises the issue of the socio-political effects of the pornography industries on the status of women.

At the heart of my discussion will be feminist resistance, and I will look in depth at a particular and little-known case history of the use of consumer boycott by a group of feminists in the late 1970s as a means of stopping the use of violent images of women in the promotion of rock music. This particular example will also lay the cornerstone for my argument that feminists could define a more active role for themselves in determining corporate media policy as regards the portrayal of women. Such a role would begin to alter the relations of power between women and the pornography industries in a more concrete way.

Definition of Terms

As stated above, pornography will be used to name both the images of women and young females in bondage or experiencing other

assaultive acts, as well as the media containing these images. My use of the term pornography coincides with what is usually considered "hard-core" or "gyno-thanatic" pornography, that is portrayals that are violent and woman-destroying (Tong, 1984, p. 10). I distinguish this form of pornography from what has been called erotica (sexual materials where the nature of the portrayal is mutuality and nonviolent among the adult actors) or soft-core pornography (sexist sexual portrayals, that is, portrayals which somehow negatively objectify women's sexuality but which do not feature abuse). My reason for focusing on violent pornography is that it is these images which have been the greatest concern for feminists and most often the focus of feminist resistance. Although critics such as Ann Douglas and Rosemarie Tong also might question the harmful effects of Silhouette romance novels and programs like "Charlie's Angels" on women's sexual standing with men's, these have not motivated the same kind of controversy and organization among feminists. We stand to learn the most about resistance from examining the instances of feminist praxis in which women have been the most decisive and which have resulted in specific changes.

Feminism will mean both the philosophy that there should be economic, political and social equality between the sexes and the specific efforts by women and men to modify or restructure social institutions in order to bring that equality about.

I use Marx's term praxis, or meaningful engagement with society to bring about a desired change, to explore some of the ways that feminists have tried to eradicate or contain

pornography. Marx believed that individuals are changed by their experience of changing the world (Donovan, 1985, p. 70). In the context of this discussion feminist praxis with regard to altering the availability of pornography has served as a vehicle of empowerment for women.

In the course of the essay I will be concerned with resistance as a particular form of feminist praxis. Michel Foucault's work on power and resistance is useful to examine forms of organized feminist resistance to pornography as it has been (and might be) structured.

The Emergence of Pornography in Mainstream Media

By the mid 1970s the American media industries had fully discovered sex -- at least a use of sex that went beyond previous standards and levels of use. The much-touted sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s not only freed various modes of sexual behavior from the constraints of social disapproval but it made possible a flood of pornography (Longino, 1980, p. 40). The 1970s became the decade when pornography left the underground, back alley places it had occupied and took its place proudly in the mainstream channels of American mass communication.

By 1977 there were 40 different magazines featuring soft-core and hard-core pornography available on American newsstands; and the sale of pornographic films in the Los Angeles area alone had grown from $15 million in 1969 to $85 million in 1976, only seven years later (Longino, 1980, p. 41). Content analysis research by Malamuth and Spinner (1980) and Don Smith (1976) shows that mainstream sex-oriented magazines, such as Playboy and Penthouse,

and adult paper-back books featured increasing use of rape battering and other scenes filled with violence against women by men between 1969 and 1979. The rituals of sado-masochism -- bondage, torture, mutilation -- made their way into magazine and advertising art by the mid 1970s, and sometime in 1976 the film "Snuff," which depicted the murder and dismemberment of its female subject, found its way into Los Angeles movie houses, thus ushering in a popular new genre of films (with similar themes) of the same name.

Figures 1-9 illustrate the kind of pornographic art that began to be widely used in mainstream media during the decade of the 1970s.

Figure 1 shows a billboard advertising the film "Bloodline." The title of the film makes an explicit link between sex (love) and violence (death), and the accompanying visual image of a woman with her naked throat encircled by a red ribbon (the bloodline) and her mouth posed in what might be a silent scream imply female victimization. This particular artwork was used to promote the film in magazines and newspapers, as well as on this Seattle billboard.

Figures 2 and 3 further illustrate the use of female victimization in advertising. Figure 2, a magazine ad for a pair of shoes, appeared in 1978-1979. The female model lies still on a tile floor, and we might wonder if she is simply sleeping off that last glass of wine that fell from her hand except for the image of a man's face in the mirror at her side. Her limp body and his expressionless face imply foul play. There is second voyeuristic theme here as both the male in the ad and we, the viewers, steal

looks at this eerie scene.

Figure 3 shows an album cover for the group Cold Blood. The title of the record, "Thriller," forms a banner over the female model's lifeless body. Unlike the model in Figure 2, we are told here explicitly that the woman is dead and that she died in cold blood. And while there is no sign of blood, there is a hint of struggle from her open blouse, missing shoe, scattered contents of her handbag. The pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes near her lifeless hand underscore that this cold-blooded murder of a woman was not only a thriller, but a lucky strike for some unknown assailant.

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the trivialization of gang rape, as in each case a group of male rock stars are about to attack its female victim. Figure 4, the back side of the album cover "X-Rated" by the group Black Oak Arkansas, is noteworthy in that its about-to-be victim appears to be just a turned-on and willing participant as she drops her blouse casually from the loft. The man standing in this scene has opened his belt and blue jeans, and just now he is taking his first step up the ladder where the woman awaits him (she is depicted on the album's front). The rest of the group lie about in states of semidress awaiting their turn. This scene, photographed in what appears to be the hayloft of a barn, is modeled after midwestern jokes about the farmer's daughter, in which the daughter always snares some unsuspecting male into sexual encounters. Like the farmer's daughter, who instigates the forbidden escapades, the woman here is shown in charge of her own violation and seems quite pleased about it.

Figure 5 cartoonizes the sexual pursuit of a female character by four members of the musical group New York City. The album's title "The Best of New York City" raises the question "The best for whom?" Certainly not the best for this woman, whose fear and efforts to get away are juxtaposed with the looks of pleasure on the faces of her pursuers.

Figure 6 shows a now well-known Vogue magazine ad in which the flexibility of the female model's jumpsuit is demonstrated by a strong slap to her back from her angry-looking male companion. Indeed, the terrified looking woman and her clothing seem to jump out at us from the page. The look of terror and pain on her face are believable; we can imagine a scream coming from her throat. This ad suggests that real-life assault was involved in the making of the photograph, for how else could this particular action have been occurred except by one person hitting another? Pornographic images such as this underlie feminist complaints that real-life violence against women is involved in the production of pornography (Dworkin, 1979).

In Figure 7 we are shown only the well-dressed model, who is advertising men's clothing. His poised upper body, the readiness of his hands to strangle, and the look on his face do not bode well for his invisible victim (who lies somewhere off the page, in the mind of the viewer). We are not told explicitly that this man's target is a woman, but then we don't need to be told this. It is women viewers of this ad who are most likely to feel the threat of this man's implied violence.

Figure 8 shows a 1976 record album cover for the group Ohio Players' album "Pleasure." The cover art depicts a woman shaven,

bound, and hanging; she might be dead or alive; she is expressionless and helpless. The question arises again, "Whose pleasure?" No pleasure for this hapless woman, rendered powerless through bondage and physical mutilation. So, pleasure for whom? What did the artists and the product manufacturers, Warner Communications, Inc., mean to say with such bold, startling, and confusing cover art?

Figure 9, a now-famous 1978 cover from Hustler magazine, turns its leggy female subject into a passive plate of ground meat. At the same time, the message from Hustler publisher Larry Flynt promises that the magazine will no longer treat women like pieces of meat. The contradiction is striking between the written message and the graphic image. The magazine since 1978 has continued its campaign against women with pornography, sexist cartoons, and stories that feminists have continued to protest.

Again, as the audience, we are implicated first as voyeurs gazing in at these sexual activities, and, second, as consumers who buy and, thereby support, the messages contained in this symbolic art. Feminists in the 1970s, who began to criticize mainstream media art, such as this, were quick to point out that in both roles we are faced with choices. As an audience member, we have the ability to evaluate the messages conveyed to us in the art and to analyze, accept, or reject them. As consumers, we are able to buy or not buy the product advertised and to influence others to act similarly. Both roles represent positions of power that can, as we shall see, figure centrally into organized social change.

Power Relations Between Women and Media Industries

Women's relationship with the mass media industries that produce pornography cannot be separated from women's relationships with other institutions in society. Those relationships are best defined in terms of inequality between the sexes, an inequality rooted in power relations. In her book Sexual Politics (1968), Kate Millett defined the relationship between the sexes, in general, as one that is inherently political:

> When one group rules another, the relationship betweeen the two is political. When such an arrangement is carried out over a long period of time it develops an ideology (feudalism, racism, etc.). All historical civilizations are patriarchies: their ideology is male supremacy (Millett, 1968, p. 111)

Millett further suggests that historically when women stepped out of line, away from the roles and rules established for them by male-controlled social institutions, that men have tended to regain control through violence -- rape, battering, sequestration, murder. Sexual politics, she said, obtains consent for such systematic control through the socialization of both sexes (Millett quoted in Donovan, 1985, p. 145). For many feminists, pornography has represented the symbolic enactment of such control.

Sociologist Diana E.H. Russell argues that pornography produces harmful effects for women by helping to create a social climate in which the victimization of women is seen as a common and accepted relationship between the sexes. Such messages convey cultural norms that women deserve to have less power and value than the men who dominate them (and control society) (Russell, 1980, 1984). The fear on the part of Russell and other

anti-pornography leaders in both the popular and academic fronts has been that such messages are internalized by both men and women, thereby contributing to the incidence of violence against women and, ultimately, to the continued secondary status of women.

Their critique of pornography has inspired a new generation of research into the behavioral effects of pornography by Neil Malamuth and Edward Donnerstein (1984), and others who have sought to find whether subjects' viewing of violent pornography shaped their attitudes and practices toward the abuse of women in real life. Some studies are beginning to suggest that such links do exist. However, Malamuth and Donnerstein warn against pinning all the blame on pornography for male aggressive behavior toward women. Instead, they suggest looking more broadly for a more complex set of social factors (one of them being pornography) that interact to produce male violence against women (Malamuth and Donnerstein, 1984, pp. xvi-xvii). Feminists have also sought to explain the rather sudden emergence of mainstream pornography in the 1970s, positing the possibility that the depictions of physical and sexual violence were not so much a product of newfound sexual freedoms representing the sexual revolution as they were a masculine backlash to an increasingly bold and successful women's rights movement. From the early 1960s the growing feminist movement had challenged men's power and authority on every front as women asserted themselves in legislatures, Congress, courts, workplaces, families, churches, and their everyday relationships with men.

Some men have accepted the personal and social changes

brought on by the feminist movement. They have grown in their own definitions of gender and social roles, and many of them have worked alongside feminists over the years. Indeed, feminists have relied on male allies in elected posts and other positions of authority to bring about many of the things they demanded. On the other hand, many men have not received feminism well, in fact, they have worked to slow or reverse feminist efforts to bring about equality.

Feminist media scholar Judith Bat-Ada (1980) has observed that mainstream pornographic magazines like Playboy, Hustler, and Penthouse, appeared and rose in prominance side-by-side with the feminist movement in the 1960s. Their publishers Hefner, Flynt, and Guccione, respectively, depicted women in increasingly powerless and ridiculous contexts as women's real social and political power increased, according to Bat-Ada. She believes that these popular "soft-core" pornographic industries laid the foundation for other industries to follow suit in their subject matter (Bat-Ada, 1980, pp. 121-124). In other words, these early leaders set a social agenda for treating the female as "other" and then setting about dehumanizing her symbolically. The dehumanizing process of pornography was less obvious, Bat-Ada says, because it occurred in an erotic context at a time when sexual liberation was being advocated by both women and men. Some women, like many men, jumped on the Playboy bandwagon; this has tended to legitimize the exploitation of women through pornography (p. 122). The increasing availablility of both soft-core and hard-core pornography through the 1960s and 1970s tended to reinforce men's place of superiority, according to Andrea Dworkin.

The central component in this manifestation of male superiority is power (Dworkin, 1979; MacKinnon, 1987).

How do we begin to understand the presence and use of pornography in the face of male supremacy, or rather, the larger context of men's and women's relations of power? Michel Foucault's work on power, knowledge and sexuality provides[5] a useful set of analytical tools toward such a beginning. In Volume I: The History of Sexuality Foucault posits that power as regards sexuality is schematized in a juridical form and that its effects are obedience. His theory, which gives credence ~~credence~~ to assertions by Dworkin, Russell, and other feminists claiming harm from pornography, says that the subject who is constituted as a subject is the one who obeys:

> To the formal homogeneity of power in these various instances corresponds the general form of submission in the one who is constrained by it . . . A legislative power on one side, and an obedient subject on the other (Foucault, 1980, p. 85).

The rules and laws that have evolved out of our western tradition have in fact guaranteed male domination throughout our social institutions. The law, in particular, which has been formulated with little involvement by women and without regard to women's experiences, generalizes men's views and experiences to be those of everyone. Among feminists' recent efforts have been attempts to make known the harm that women have suffered in the private as well as public spheres (Dyer, 1989, p. 8), but progress incorporating this perspective into law is slow.

First Amendment law has been perhaps the most difficult area to affect because Americans hold their beliefs in free speech in

such reverence. Radical feminists have criticized so-called free speech protections as an illusion, particularly regarding pornography, saying that such constitutional guarantees really protect the rights of those who own the media (i.e., the propertied class, the composition of which is still nearly all male). Communication scholar Carolyn Stewart Dyer reminds us that women own and manage relatively few businesses of any kind in U.S. society, including media industries. Even where women fill many lower ranking positions in which they determine the content that is printed or broadcast, the media remain male institutions with male definitions of who and what should be conveyed. Because women hold substantially lower positions throughout the economic, political, and social spheres of American society, they have little opportunity to guide or determine the standards and ethics which govern society's institutions, such as the mass media (Dyer, 1989, pp. 6-7).

In general, according to Dyer, the liberal feminist perspective holds that American women usually have been able to express themselves in speaking and writing, and thereby carry on their discourse about women's status and the need for extension of rights. But she goes on to say that the courts have not provided a very satisfactory resolution in the many instances where the publication and distribution of feminist ideas were prevented, nor have the courts (and, I might add, legislatures) taken positions which would guarantee access for women to the channels of communication (Dyer, 1989).

Stuart Hall's model showing how messages are encoded into media content in phases of production further illustrates who

speaks through ads, films, magazines, television, and other mass media. Hall argues that the profit orientation of the industries, the industry(ies) policies, with regard to standards and practices, and the artists' and gatekeepers' own values and tastes enter into the determination of media content. But Hall does not render powerless the audiences who receive these messages. In fact, his model is balanced to show active involvement by audiences (consumers) in the decoding, taking of meaning, and the subsequent application or disregard of or use of those messages (Hall, 1979).

Diamond and Quinby accurately observe that Foucault's analytics of power with regard to the deployment of sexuality does little to illuminate society's codes as regards women and sexuality, particularly the brutalization of women (Diamond and Quinby, p. 197). The authors include in these "darkest byproducts

magazines, videos, and other media, and they note that contemporary feminism was born in protest of these technologies. I would add that Foucault's entire volume of Discipline and Punish (1979) does little to recognize that the technologies of power which have been used to control women these last centuries have often lain outside those used to control and punish men. Had Foucault investigated this difference, he would have written both Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality to include considerations of battering, rape, and pornography.

But as many feminist scholars have discovered, Foucault's work converges with feminism in a number of ways, one of those being the identification of the body as the site of power, that

is, the locus of domination through which docility and subjectivity are accomplished (Diamond and Quinby, 1988, p. x). Foucault's notions that power and knowledge are synonymous and that, historically, sexuality emerged as a new mechanism for organizing knowledge are useful to our present critique of pornography.

For instance, in his study of sexuality, Foucault considered the effect of the modes of domination, submission, and subjugation which he believed ultimately lead to an effect of obedience. Moreover, he said, this obedience invokes an element of secretiveness as indispensible to their operation (p. 86). Scholars who have followed and/or been part of the feminist discourse on women's subjugation have written at length about the phenomenon of women's silence on their own status. This historical silence, which has tended to surround women's subjugation in a kind of secrecy, is most profound with respect to pornography. Feminist analysis and protest of pornography did not really emerge until the 1970s (more than a decade after the feminist movement began), when the visibility of violent images in the mainstream media could no longer be ignored. In her work Pornography and Silence, Susan Griffin explores this delayed response and suggests that the pornographic mind of men really dominates our entire culture (Griffin, 1981, p. 3) and renders half of the population powerless to speak.

But, as we shall see later when we look at the ways in which women began to name and rebel against abuse and pornography, the silence and secrecy were overcome and the process formed a

newfound source of women's power. Hall and Foucault's theories converge in this regard to suggest at least one way of considering feminist resistance to pornography. Both scholars have suggested that power is something that is ever-present, diffuse , and dynamic in its arrangements, rather than fixed in any particular configuration. This view of power suggests that the social, economic, and social control which men have been able to exercise over women through social institutions (including the pornography industries) can also be challenged by individual women of like mind joining together in resistance.

We should not leave the discussion of women's relationship to the pornography industries without considering some of the underlying economic factors which further illustrate the nature of those relations.

Many critics of feminist antipornography work have claimed that women willingly assume jobs as models of pornographic advertising, films, and other media products. And, in fact, some feminsts have taken the position that both pornography and prostitution represent viable employment for those who either enjoy the work or who have few skills to compete in the marketplace. There are at least two factors at work here. We have already explored the first, that is the nature of a society where institutions, women's relationship to those institutions, and, in fact, women's definitions of themselves are defined by ideals of male superiority. The second we shall take up now, that is the matter of women's sexuality as a commodity in the economic system.

Although Karl Marx had very little to say about women and virtually nothing to say about pornography, the ideas that he has contributed toward understanding political economy are of use to us in gaining an understanding of women's involvement in the pornography industries. I will consider some of Marx's most applicable concepts and theories to suggest why women participate in the production of pornography.

Marx had laid out his theory of political economy in The German Ideology (1846), establishing that the class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control over the means of mental production, and that those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. He went on to say that the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas (p. 64). Though Marx's world was one divided mainly into the owners of production (capitalists) and those who worked for them (proletarian workers), we can see the resemblance between his world and the male-dominated society that feminists define. In the second the ruling class are men whose ideas, laws, and standards determine a whole social system, and those who are subject to them are women.

Marx also argued that class consciousness develops in dialectical opposition to the ruling class (Donovan, 1985, p. 67), and if we were to look at the roots of feminism (whether in the eighteenth century Enlightenment or the modern movement dating from the 1960s), we would find women defining their problems and goals in terms of the conditions of subjugation determined by a male-controlled world. Some radical feminists have in fact called women a gendered class, subject to the dictates and resulting

false consciousness of men's world (Benhabib, 1987, p. 2; Donovan, p. 68). There emerges a kind of common wisdom about the suggestion of a gendered class, whether stated by feminists or not, in that the feminist tool for empowering women has been first and foremost the process of consciousness-raising. Precisely so named, it was the phenomenon of women joining "consciousness-raising groups" that met in homes, community centers, and churches during the 1960s and 1970s that brought thousands of women into feminist political awareness and involvement.

In true Marxian fashion, it is the woman who has not yet discovered this knowledge of her relationship to ruling forces who still abides by the ideals and standards set for her by those forces. Why should we be surprised, then, that women, willingly or otherwise, would pose for the cameras of pornographers? Doesn't their participation serve to substantiate Marx's proposition that the oppressed are drawn into their own subjugation?

Feminist historian Gerda Lerner chooses to use the term subordination, rather than subjugation to describe women's relationship to men, because it allows for the possibility of women's collusion in the processes that dominate them, collusion in exchange for protection and reward (Lerner, 1986). Lerner departs from a Marxist-feminist analysis to explain the origins of patriarchy by opting for a hypothesis that men appropriated women's sexual and reproductive capacity prior to the formation of private property and class society (Lerner, 1986, p. 8). Even so, she does not deny that women form a social class that depends on

its material relations with men for both status and well-being, nor does she reject the concept of consciousness as a factor in women's participation. How can we then explain the mechanisms by which women engage in such collusion/participation?

Marx's intricate development of the concept of commodity in Capital: Volume I suggests at least one mechanism. It is through the commodification of sexuality, and women's sexuality in particular, that we find a plausible explanation. Marx stated that the usefulness of a thing makes it a use-value, and that it was the physical property of the item which made it useful (Capital, p. 126). The process of trading something with intrinsic use-value for something else assigns the exchange-value to the item. There is a dimension of human labor to this system, as well, for the woman who "models" does a job and is paid for it. However, instead of trading a manual or mental skill, she trades a physical attribute for her income. It takes little imagination to see the applicability of this model to women's use of their sexuality for income. It also takes little research to discover (or at least suppose) who becomes the wealthier for the enterprise we consider, for as with other industries, it is the owners of production who profit the most handily from the final product -- not the women whose bodies are seen among product consumers.

Pornography models have stated explicitly that they sought employment in the business because they needed the money and that they felt their bodies were a marketable commodity, just as their bodies would have been in prostitution. One woman said that she felt that prostitutes were more honest than models, that models wanted to believe they weren't "hooking." In fact, she believed

that the women in both professions were caught in situations not unlike rape, where ~~there~~ their sexuality was taken and used and they had little choice in the matter, once involved in the occupation. She said that models are pressured to do "harder" core films from job to job, and by then it is impossible to return to "legitimate" (non-sexual or even soft-core) modeling (Lederer, 1980, p. 62).

This use of pornography to sell a product also suggests several things to us in the context of the present discussion. First, the commodification of sexuality through pornography basically satisfies Marx's theory of commodities because it allows the item at issue (sexuality) to be reproduced over and over again (through printing) and sold as any other product would be. Second, we can use the theory of commodities as we have here to demonstrate the social relations between parties involved, i.e., the product manufacturers (corporate owners) and female pornography models (exploited gendered class representatives). And third, we might logically suppose that women's employment in the pornography industries would cause them to feel disempowered, separated from the value of that which they have sold -- in Marx's words, alienated from their labor and their bodies (Donovan, 1985, p. 70; Lederer, 1980).

The central problematic faced by feminists has been to define a praxis that will address the problems of the exploitation of women's labor, the real-life physical and sexual victimization they sometimes experience in the process of modeling, and the visual victimization in the products of pornography themselves. In his Manuscripts (1944), Marx argued that the central defining

characteristic of human beings is that they engage in creative activity. Josephine Donovan (1985) observes that:

> At times Marx's notion of praxis veers in the direction elaborated by later phenomonologists -- that the human being constitutes the world, endows it with significance, humanizes it. In this way the split between the subjective and objective (and its inherent alienation) is healed or fused into an integrated process. Products no longer have significance as commodities, but rather have the qualitative personal meaning endowed by human consciousness (p. 71).

It was, in fact, feminists with a new political consciousness about themselves and the relations of power between women and social institutions who defiined a practical approach, a feminist praxis, with regard to pornography in the 1970s. We should now examine the events and actors involved in the resulting feminist resistance to pornography.

Feminist Resistance to Pornography

Feminist concerns about the proliferation of pornography in the 1970s did not -- nor do they yet -- bring a unified response. Instead, there were numerous separate efforts that sprang up around the nation, most of them headquartered in the large east- and west-coast cities. Ad hoc groups as well as formally established organizations soon addressed single-issue or multi-issue complaints with regard to violent images of women and children that by 1975 appeared routinely each day in the mass channels of communication.

The random but steady emergence of groups with a feminist philosophy to try and offer some remedy for this menace (pornography) demonstrates two Foucauldian claims: First, that "power comes from below from innumerable points, in the interplay

of nonegalitarian and mobile relations," and, second, "where there is power there is resistance" (Foucault, 1980, pp. 94-95).

My goal here is to consider some of these pluralities of resistance represented within the antipornography movement as they began to be defined and implemented during the 1970s.

The backdrop to the antipornography movement were two earlier movements, those to end rape and battering, which had emerged in the late 1960s. Neither the resistance that emerged in the form of powerful leaders like Susan Brownmiller, Andrea Dworkin, Robin Morgan, Julia London, Diana Russell, Audre Lorde and others, nor the most visible organizations such as Women Against Pornography (WAP), Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM), and Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) could have occurred without these two groundbreaking antecedent movements that became and remain central to the more encompassing "feminist movement."

These earlier campaigns to stop violence against women began in the late 1960s through the phenomenon of "consciousness-raising groups" that brought women together, usually weekly, in homes, churches, and community centers to examine their lives and to name their experiences. It was here that the women of America discovered the frequency with which they had endured private humiliation and pain in the contexts of their marriages and other personal relationships. They identified these private agonies as rape, incest, other sexual violence and battering. Whole groups of women soon became aware that the violence in their personal lives collectively formed a public problem, and they took their newfound political knowledge into their communities in the form of

victims' support groups, legal advocacy programs, and preventative education programs.

The first rape crisis center was established in Washington D.C. in 1973, and the first women's shelters in major cities a year later. But by 1980, there were virtually hundreds of both all across the nation. By the end of the decade, these respective services had formed ~~into~~ the still powerful National Coalition Against Sexual Assault and National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Schechter, 1982).

In no other aspect of the feminist movement has more anger converged than in efforts to stop the violence in women's lives. Women have brought forth all their pent-up rage against their own experiences of subjugation and/or abuse and targeted men and patriarchal society as the perpetrators of violence against them. Both the popular literature about violence against women and the services organized to serve victims have tended to be militant.

When sado-masochism and other forms of brutality emerged as a trend in advertising, films, and other mass media in the mid 1970s, feminists in the anti-violence movements turned with a vengeance upon it. From the beginning, these feminists assumed there was a link between depicted violence against women and the real-life violence that women experienced at the hands of men. The links they made varied from pornography's contribution to a social atmosphere where such gendered violence was socially condoned to direct motivation of sexually and physically violent acts. The early analyses by groups who led the way with public education on the harms of pornography -- groups like Women Against

Pornography (WAP) in New York and Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) in San Francisco -- were sometimes incoherent and without substantiating facts. For instance, the WAVPM slide show failed to distinguish between depictions of sexism and brutality in the media, nor did they provide much in the way of evidence or theory between media depictions of violence and the real-life recorded incidence of violent acts. For example, one slide sequence showed a magazine photo of a woman bound and being tortured, and the next showed a police photo of a battered wife; the accompanying narration offered little explanation how the first photo related to the second (Tong, 1984, p.30). The slide show tended to produce mixed feelings of anger and confusion in audiences.

Take Back the Night marches, organized annually in cities throughout the U.S. since the late 1970s, have been criticized both inside and outside feminist ranks for mobilizing thousands of women around the least common form of assault -- street violence -- against women. What good is it to reclaim the streets, critics asked, if the most common assault against women is by those they know -- family members, boyfriends, co-workers neighbors?

These were among the earliest and most visible of the antipornography groups, and, for their shortcomings, they served as the first efforts by feminists to articulate women's outrage at seeing others like themselves rendered helpless and brutalized in the channels of communication. More important, they were the first to ask why these images existed and to lay strategies for controlling their availability. The fact that these early activities drew crowds and produced the desired results served to

empower those involved to press on.

WAVPM, for instance, staged direct picket lines and other forms of confrontation between its members and the owners of businesses that sold pornography magazines or showed pornographic films in their theaters in an effort to try and stop the sale and showing of pornographic media (Newspage, November 1977). Pickets and leafletting campaigns had earlier proven successful in March 1976 in Los Angeles when Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) had organized its members outside theaters around the city to protest the showing of the film "Snuff." The film's distributors withdrew the film from all of southern California theaters a week later (London, 1988).

Although WAVAW shared the basic belief of other antipornography groups of the mid 1970s that "violence in the media contributes to real life violence" (WAVAW newsletter, August 1977), WAVAW distinguished itself from most of the other groups by its basic tactic of demanding "corporate responsibility and accountability to the public" with regard to the use of violent images of women in any of its products or promotions (WAVAW newsletter, August 1977). According to attorney Joan Howarth, a WAVAW organizer, the group wanted to focus on a national-level, mainstream industry, a "legitimate" business that used pornography in its promotions, as a means of advancing the notion that corporations ought to be more responsible and, moreover, that their public (consumers) could make them so (Howarth interview, 1988).

WAVAW found its focus unexpectedly in the record industry when Warner Communications, Inc. released its promotion campaign

for the rock group Rolling Stones' album "Black and Blue" in fall 1976. The magazine ads and in-store life-size displays featured a full-color photo of a bound, gagged, bruised, and partially clad woman whose long slender legs stretched across the album cover. The caption read, "I'm black and blue by the Rolling Stones, and I love it" (See Figure 10). Feminists in southern California had reacted with outrage immediately, but when the billboard with the same visual art went up over Sunset Strip in L.A. (See Figure 11), they organized to rid their midst of its presence.

Julia London, another WAVAW organizer who had worked earlier to unionize California farmworkers, together with local leaders of the National Organization for Women (NOW), led vocal and massive local protests until Warner removed the billboard. The groups next inventoried all current Warner-Atlantic-Electra-Asylum (all Warner subsidiaries) record art and promotional materials. They found routine use of rape, battering, torture, and bondage themes, such as shown on the Ohio Players' "Pleasure" and Cold Blood "Thriller" albums. By November 1976 WAVAW and California NOW had called for a nationwide boycott of all Warner records. Their demand of Warner board chairman Ahmet M. Ertegun was that WCI adopt and implement a corporate-wide policy to refrain from depicting violence in its record cover art and promotion campaigns.

London and Howarth, who became the boycott negotiating and policy team, advanced a multi-pronged strategy. First, they began what would be a year-long process to hold negotiating meetings with Warner executives in New York City corporate headquarters.

Second, they encouraged the formation of more than 25 WAVAW chapters across the nation to conduct essential educational and boycott-related work. Their national network of WAVAW members leafletted shopping malls and record stores, presented slide-talks to church and other groups, and created visibility for the boycott in local and national news media.

Warner executives at first denied or minimized their companies' use of violence in record art. But within two years, during which time the boycott succeeded in lowering Warner record profits substantially, executives had come around to a greater willingness to discuss remedies. In the summer of 1979, the company made its first gesture toward eliminating violent cover art by withdrawing its album "Hammer" by the group of the same name (Figure 12) from stores across the country and ordering the revision of the cover art (which features a woman about to be hit by a hammer coming through the door). On November 8, just as another end-of-year holidays approached, Warner issued the corporate-wide policy that WAVAW had called for two and a half years earlier, and thereby averted another massive loss of holiday sales.

In a joint WAVAW-WCI press release, dated November 8, Warner Communications President David H. Horowitz stated:

> The WCI record divisions oppose the depiction of violence, against women or men, on album covers and in related promotional material. This policy expresses the WCCI record group's opposition to the exploitation of violence, sexual or otherwise, in any form. Although this policy is subjectg to prior contractual restrictions where applicable, the WCI record group has chosen to strongly discourage the use of images of physical and sexual violence against women in these cases as well (WAVAW press release, November 8, 1979).

Joan Howarth, presently an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union in Los Angeles, says that the success of the boycott was followed up by the purchase of WCI stock by several WAVAW members. This enabled them to attend annual stockholders' meetings and renew the corporate anti-violence policy through resolutions and scheduled discussions. In time, however, the national network of WAVAW began to lose strength. Chapters either went their own way with new, locally-defined antipornography activities, or disbanded altogether. By 1980, London, Howarth, and other leaders had moved on to new jobs, and the headquarters office was eventually closed. No one remained active to monitor the long-term implementation of the WCI policy (Howarth interview, 1988).

My own recent efforts (March and April 1988) to determine the status of the WCI anti-violence policy met with defeat, when Warner executives refused to talk with me or to return my calls on 12 separate occasions.

What did the WAVAW boycott accomplish? There were at least four outcomes. First, the boycott mobilized the first major feminist-led national consumer action to protest what women believed to be corporate exploitation of women's image. Second, the boycott altered the relations of power between feminists and a media industry using pornography to sell its products by calling for new ethical guidelines for operation. These guidelines, in the form of a corporate artistic policy, recognized that violent images are inappropriate and potentially harmful.

Third, the boycott's success provided a tremendous source of empowerment for many women who had identified with the goals and

efforts of the boycott. Feminists and those willing to stand with them had faced goliath and they had won. The success tended to legitimize the claims and activities of the antipornography movement.

And fourth, the boycott sent ripples through the entire record industry, possibly bringing about a change in artistic direction for other record promotional materials, as well. In October 1979, when WCI recalled the Hammer album for redesign, industry trade journals took note of the event and its purpose (The Aquarian, October 10-17, 1979). Feminists generally agree that the use of sexual violence had begun to diminish noticeably in advertising by 1978 (at the height of the WAVAW boycott). And though we would need additional research to determine what, if any, effect the boycott had on this event, we might reasonably hypothesize that the boycott contributed to it.

In the context of this essay, the WAVAW boycott is also interesting and relevant in that it tended to recognize the commodification of sexuality in the form of pornography. Within the parameters of critical theory, which tries to recognize the contradictions in capitalist society, such recognition illustrates an unexpected twist to the notion of sexuality as a consumer issue. Within the limits of a political economy, WAVAW leaders built a strategy for resistance that was effective.

Reflecting on Stuart Hall's model of encoding/decoding, we might also view the WAVAW boycott's success in terms of audience power -- power to respond to media content in such a way as to alter that content (Hall, 1979). The example of this boycott may

offer a more viable option for feminists to control the availability of pornography than legal remedies have to date.

In her book Women, Sex, and the Law, feminist scholar Rosemarie Tong notes that as hard as it is to convince people that there is anything harmful about gyno-thanatic pornography, it is even harder to convince them something should be done about it -- particularly when that "something" is statutory in nature (Tong, 1984, p. 13).

Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon have been the most visible leaders for efforts to secure statutory limits on the sale and distribution of pornography. Working both independently and as a team, Dworkin and MacKinnon have written extensively and advocated for the adoption of laws that define pornography as a practice of sex discrimination that threatens the health, safety, peace, welfare, and equality of citizens in the community (See Appendix, the Model Anti-pornography Civil Rights Ordinance) (Dworkin and MacKinnon, 1988, p. 138).

In theory, women who have been harmed (by threat or act) and who trace their harm to pornography available in the community can make a complaint under the law. To date ordinances written by Dworkin and MacKinnon and advanced for adoption have been considered by the Minneapolis (MN), Indianopolis (IN), Cambridge (MA), and Bellingham (WA) city councils, and while at least one council (Indianapolis) has adopted the statute, it was soon struck down on grounds of unconstitutionality, a threat to the First Amendment.

But MacKinnon, an attorney and a scholar on civil rights matters, counters by saying that to make the First Amendment

meaningful to women, the state must also take an affirmative approach, providing the right of access that would guarantee women the opportunity to speak (Dyer, 1989, p. 14). She echoes the arguments of other legal scholars like Jerome Barron who has pointed out the problem of access for those without economic and political power in society; Barron has suggested the consideration of legal mechanisms to enhance access to mass media for these persons. Although he did not speak directly about women, we can see the applicability of his suggestion.

In assessing the Dworkin/MacKinnon ordinance, as well as other proposed laws to address pornography, Rosemarie Tong asserts that to date no legal antipornography remedy has been put forward. All proposed have been somehow "flawed or limited," she says (Tong, 1984, p.27), and yet she recognizes the value that such legislation holds in terms of furthering feminist discourse about both pornography and issues linking sexuality and women's equality.

I would add to her assessment that even with laws regulating the availability of pornography in place, prosecutors can't always be counted on to bring charges. Research by Pritchard et. al. indicates that what seems to prompt prosecutorial action is prosecutors' own estimates of public opinion among their constituents more than the presence of a law in and of itself (Pritchard et. al., 1987, p. 395). Nor can citizens be counted on to obey laws just because they are on the books. Pritchard also points out that "the degree of [most] laws' impact on behavior can be situated somewhere between the condition of having no influence

at all and the condition of having massive, direct, and immediate effects on human behavior" (Pritchard, 1989).

In light of the difficulties at this time in passing and making use of statutory measures to control pornography, and, the lack of reliability in either prosecutors to bring charges or citizens to voluntarily adapt their behavior to reflect the changes in law, might we not ask what the most effective way of controlling pornography might be?

The real-life lessons with regard to both statutory and nonstatutory remedies to pornography suggest that the latter are more effective. The successful example found in the 1976-79 WAVAW consumer boycott, for instance, demonstrates that a well-organized, broad-based citizen network can achieve a great deal if its goals are clear, its activities are carried out as prescribed, and there is a concurrence of public opinion as regards the campaign's issues. When both the public opinion and the goals of the consumer boycott are feminist directed, there is a better chance for the targeted corporation to respond in feminist-oreinted ways. When those corporations control the image of women, this is no small consideration.

Boycotts, such as WAVAW's 1976-79 event, suggest a way for feminists to address a major, obvious, and serious problem, such as was represented by Warner Communications' routine use of violent images of women in their record promotions. But this interesting case study also points out a couple of lessons. First, boycotts may best produce short-term remedies, such as the Warner 1979 policy on violence in record cover art. There is no evidence to show that the company maintained this policy after

1980, when local WAVAW chapters either disbanded or refocused their goals and the national headquarters ceased to function as the boycott monitor.

Second, boycotts probably can best be employed as a threat and a last resort tactic in the course of shaping corporate values regarding the depiction of women. In other words, feminist organizations taking on the task of lobbying corporations for ethical guidelines/policies regarding women's image should hold the threat of a consumer boycott over the heads of stubborn executives only when they need to. Boycotts are costly in terms of human and financial resources, and they take time. It may be less stressful and time consuming to develop other approaches to working with corporate officers for new, feminist oriented media/advertising policies.

The need for feminist praxis in the area of bringing about new ethical and operating policies as regards the image of women -- particularly when that image is pornographic -- should not be minimized. Feminists' concerns with women's image in advertising and the mass media have occupied a central stage in the popular American feminist movement since Betty Friedan's book The Feminine Mystigue (1963). The antipornography movement has been the largest and most vocal group calling for an end to women's exploitation through violent images. Image studies, particularly with regard to sexist stereotypic roles, account for the vast majority of academic gender communication studies since the early 1970s. Eventually, feminists must develop long-term strategies for attacking the ethical standards of corporations that promote

product sales or entertainment by commodifying sexuality in violent ways (or any other ways, for that matter). Only then will the relations of power between feminists and media industries begin to be altered in a substantial way.

Conclusion

This essay has shown that the relations of power between feminists (and most other women) and the pornography industries is one defined by the same gender inequality that shapes women's relationship to other social institutions. Women's lower economic, political, and social status than men's has tended to leave women out of the shaping of corporate and legal policies.

Feminists have tried to control the availability of pornography using both statutory and nonstaturory methods. Experience and evidence to date suggest that at the present time nonstatutory forms of resistance provide the most effective approach to effect such controls. The use of consumer boycotts (and other methods) to effect corporate ethics and policies as regards the production and distribution of porngraphic images of women provide reasonable mechanisms to achieve feminist goals of pornography containment.

At the same time, feminists can begin to alter the power relations between themselves and the pornography industries.

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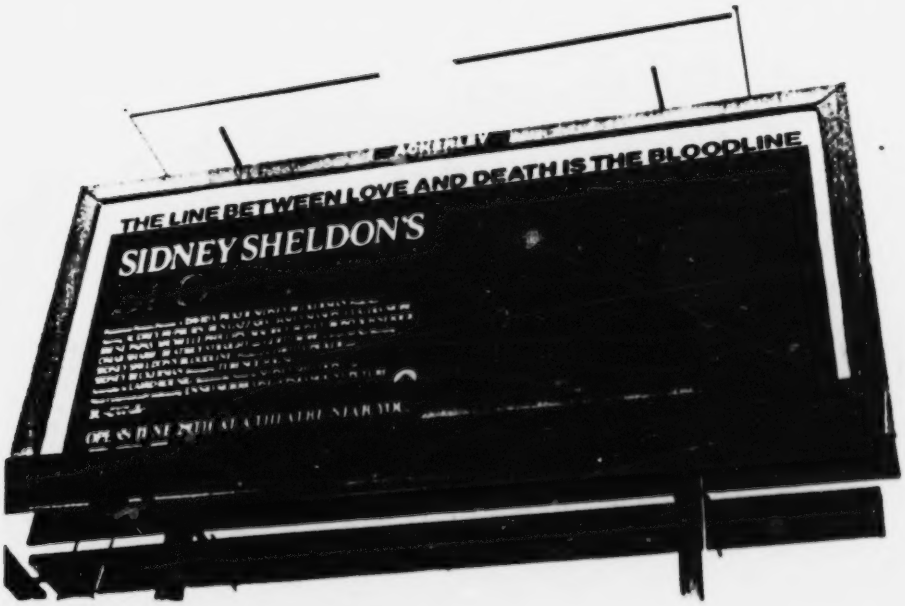

Figure 1: Billboard advertisement for the film "Bloodline" (1978).

Figure 2: Magazine ad for shoes (1978-79).

Figure 3: Cover for album "Thriller" by the rock group Cold Blood (1977).

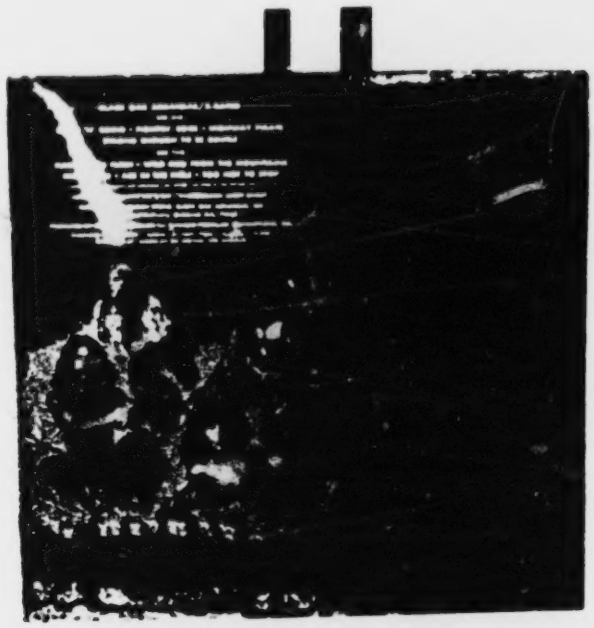

Figure 4: Back side of album cover for record "X-Rated" by rock group Black Oak Arkansas (1976).

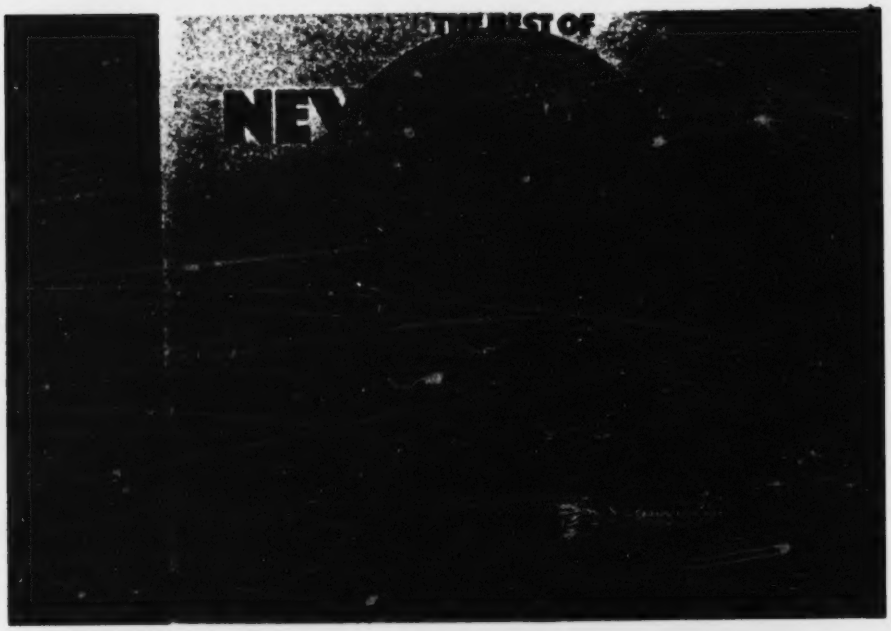

Figure 5: Front cover art for album "Best of New York City" by group New York City.

Figure 6: Vogue magazine ad for woman's jumpsuit.

Figure 7: Magazine ad for men's clothing.

Figure 8: Album cover for the Ohio Players' record "Pleasure" (1976).

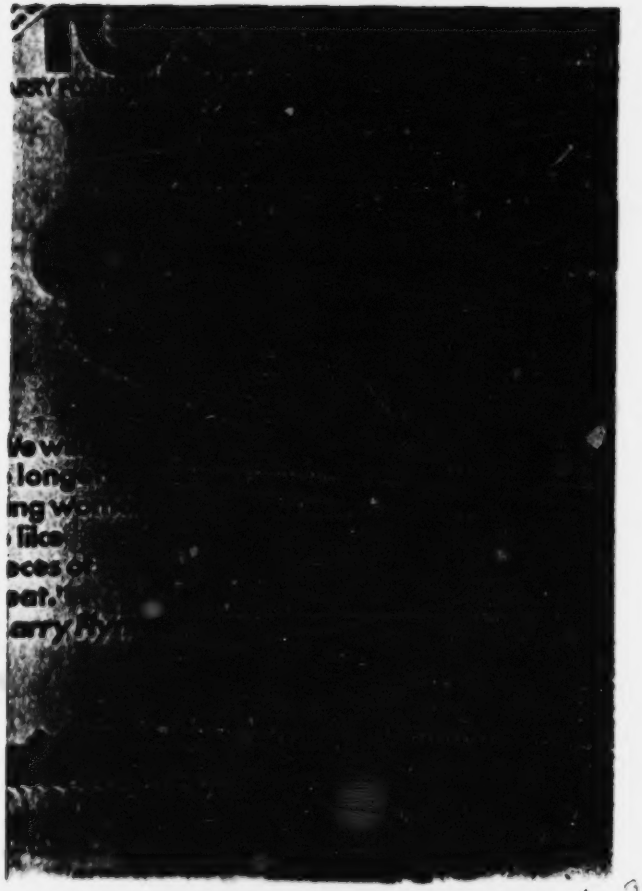

Figure 9: June 1978 cover of Hustler magazine.

Figure 10: 1976 Magazine ad for Rolling Stones' record album "Black and Blue,"

Figure 11: 1976 Billboard across Sunset Strip in Los angeles advertising Rolling Stones' record "Black and Blue."

Figure 12: Cover for group Hammer's album of same name (1979). Warner Communications withdrew this album from stands after its release and revised cover art as part of WAVAW end to boycott.